

# AAB PROCEEDINGS

10 June, 1996

Issue 34

The newsletter of the History of the Imperium Working Group (HIWG).  
Produced and distributed by Clayton R. Bush.

## Open Letter

There was a "flame war" on the HIWG mailing list. Harold posted the enclosed chairsophont letter. Leroy Guatney attacked it and him, for posting negative comments on T4 as a representative of HIWG. Harold did not back down.

Leroy called for a recall election. The discussion went on. At one point Leroy threatened to disconnect the HIWG list, and Harold wanted to expel Leroy. Leroy decided to start a group called TERRA. Summaries inside.

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## ISSUES

*Chairsophont Letter:* The letter has expressed opinions in the past. I recall reading there that TNE might be TRAVELLER's final chance, and that GDW was in trouble. I don't think Harold crossed any lines, but, yes, he was rather negative.

*My Votes:* Harold didn't do anything wrong. We don't expel people. Anyone can quit, but we've never expelled anyone.

Both motions continue to lack a second.

*Issues:* The T4 rulebook needs to be reprinted with corrections. It needs a reprinting more than MT and TNE did.

But I played with the black books, which leave a lot of gaps and holes to fill in. I never expect a rulebook to run a campaign. (I once ran 2300AD with TNE rules, creating weapon stats that seemed reasonable before the event.)

A consistent background matters to me, but I've always been prepared to ignore or interpret the history differently. And at a GenCon seminar Marc was clear about not confining himself to someone else's idea of canon.

Milieu 0 gets back to mindset I want: adventuring. I've run con events under every system but T4 so far, and I'll run a T4 event at GenCon.

Before T4 I saw enough variety to run all kinds of events someplace at some time. T4 hasn't diminished this flexibility.

## To Do

*Leaving?* Anyone wishing to end his membership need only apply for payment of unused dues. That's always been the rule. So far only one person has ever written me to do that, but anyone can.

*HIWG:* We're discussing writing a charter to specify what HIWG is for.

Communication with HIWGs who are not on the Internet remains an unsolved problem. HIWG-UK was successful in exchanging Atari ST disks. There doesn't seem to be a common media the whole group can standardize on.

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## LETTER FROM THE CHAIRSOPHONT

Once again Traveller finds itself in a time of crisis. Whether or not you personally like **Marc Miller's Traveller** (aka T4), errata has become a major issue, in much the same way that it was back in 1987 with the initial release of **MegaTraveller**. Unlike the flaws in **MegaTraveller**, however, the flaws in T4 are serious enough that Imperium Games plans to reissue some of the books they released, including the basic manual, which will also include a revised task resolution system.

Those of us who kept our investments in T4 to a minimum while the system matured are glad we hedged our bets. Those of you who invested heavily in Imperium Games products are probably feeling a bit burned now, and you have a right to do so. Imperium Games will undoubtedly want additional amounts of your money for the "fixed" versions of the books you now own.

I'd like to say that now that IG is finally getting its act together, its time for those who have been withholding their financial support from new **Traveller** products to break out their wallet. I really would like to be able to say that—but I can't. For one, I do not have any confidence (yet) that IG will actually fix what's wrong

with T4. For another, IG **Traveller** products have strayed so far from the established storyline canon, if they had been produced 10 years ago they would have been declared "unofficial" by GDW and disavowed.

While it is the prerogative of the copyright holder to publish whatever they see fit to slap the **Traveller** name on, we as consumers also have the right not to buy it. I would urge all HIWG members to critically examine IG products before purchasing them, and then make up your own mind as to whether you think they are worth it.

I am continuing to put together new material for Children of Earth, the Solomani Rim in the New Era setting I created, and I have collaborated with the members of the TNE-RCES mailing list on some projects recently. I would like to see all HIWG members actively engaged in projects for your favorite version/setting of Traveller. One day it may be left up to us and us alone to produce new Traveller material.

Peace and prosperity to one and all.

Regards,  
Harold

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## Leroy's Rebuttal/Chairsophont Letter

-- Bryan Borich & Leroy Guatney  
**CRB:** Bryan ghost-wrote a response to Harold's chairsophont letter reflecting Leroy's views. Leroy liked it, but expanded on it.

**Dear HIWG,**

**Leroy:** We are hot into the release of the newest edition of the game. Opportunities abound! Now is the time for us to move. T4 has shown the promise that a capable efficient group of (did I say competent too?) individuals, whose personality profiles fit us, can rise to a position of influence and develop Traveller background (as Roger Myhre to his credit) has said on our internet forum.

This is a time for *all* of us to get out acts together and support the game that we know and love. I

know that there has been some disharmony from folks on the Internet, complaining to IG.

**Brian Borich:** Since Imperium Games has taken over publication it has been on rocky road. They are a group of people trying to follow in some very big footsteps and quite obviously they've missed a few.

First off, it's obvious they are and or were a group that had very little experience in the publishing business, let alone publishing Traveller projects. And obviously they didn't ask for advice that they should have.

Secondly, they set a series of deadlines that were highly unrealistic and they tried sticking to them. Also obviously there was poor communications between some of the authors of the

sourcebooks to date. Not all of this is their fault, at least part of their problems were caused by listening to the desires of old Traveller players who wanted certain things. So we, as Traveller players, have to accept some of the responsibility for their problems.

They have tried to the best of their ability and within their fiscal means to please us, which admittedly isn't always easy since we all have different wants.

Imperium Games has turned around lately and is producing better products, especially the material written by the CORE group, hopefully and perhaps with our help this trend will continue.

I'm not saying that IG shouldn't be critized, or that we should buy all their products good and bad.

**Harold:** In my past letters, I have tried to concentrate on rallying the troops. This time, I felt it necessary to go beyond that. It is not something I plan on making a habit of each time out. The things I expressed are being thought or have been said by far more people than some would like to believe.

Re: "And if Harold was taking us anywhere, we'd all be publishing..."

I have done everything but place keyboards in your laps—if you aren't publishing on the Internet, in your own little fanzine, or in one of the official publications right now, it isn't my fault.

What I am saying is that when they do something wrong, they should be told so point by point, and what they should have done instead (how it could have been improved). We must also remember to live in reality in that not everybody will get what they want (for example, the design system, however it would be reasonable to expect the design system to tie together and fit with the combat system).

**Leroy:** Unfortunately, anyone with hindsight can see that they were only backing the company into a corner. They are a company after all—we are fans. My experience in another fan field has shown that the fan all too often loses sight of this arrangement.

I posted before, at the first signs of grumbings about JTAS #25, that a magazine like JTAS generally bears the look and feel of its supporters. I am sure that everyone posted an article to the magazine, but only Clay has openly said he was going to do that, and he did—JTAS #26 bears him out. A classic example of a HIWGER publishing on something he is an authority on.

If any of you have received rejection letters, I urge you to keep trying.

People have said this is our last, best hope for Traveller. I do my

best to keep politics out of my service to you. I will say that it has all been said before, and we still got T4. Don't listen to that discordant minority out there. Do what you know is fun. The era of T4 is a completely new one compared to that of the old T1. If you don't believe me, pull out your first Book 1 and compare it to the latest Book 1. Do you really think there is any comparison? I'll save you the trouble and say no. In fact, the long history of publications for this fine game has only complicated the publisher's task.

I think it is time for us to all rally around this new edition, and drop any petty hanging on to the past. Yes, even I was (~~before I was your new ChairSofa~~) (**CRB: A unilateral claim by Leroy**) rather vocal about the problems of TNE when they started showing up. I gave it a long chance, and history has borne me out. GDW and TNE along with it have folded. I've said before that we can't very well expect a new company, putting *their* startup money into it, to continue with what was a marketing failure. After all, GDW did fold.

I look forward to a day when we will see HIWG (or some other acronym if we should change it) as the new "CORE" behind IG.

— Leroy Guatney

## AAB Proceedings

AAB Proceedings is distributed to all active HIWG members. All others may acquire copies at \$2.00 per issue (or \$12 at a time).

To submit material, please send it to: Clayton R. Bush, PO Box 895, Limon, CO 80828. All materials are copyrighted by AUTHOR, and printed for discussion by permission. (N.B. Copyright law protects words, not ideas.)

## Acknowledgements

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## HIWG Connection

HIWG ("History of the Imperium Working Group") is a fan organization for the Traveller role-playing game. For membership information, write to:

**Membership Secretary:** Clay Bush, P.O. Box 895, Limon, CO 80828.

**HIWG-Australia:** David Schneider, 5 East Avenue, Allenby Gardens, SA 5009, Australia.

**HIWG-UK:** C.N. Walker, Bankside, Reddish Road, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7-6NF.

**HIWG-NZ:** Martin Rait, P.O. Box 27-025, Wellington, NZ.

## Computers

**IBM PC:** Brian Borich, 3890 50th Street, San Diego, CA 92105-3005.

**Macintosh:** Rob Prior, 67 Greenbelt Road, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada L4C 5S1.

# TERRA

--Leroy Guatney

I have reconsidered my last post. You can have your list for now.

**If any of you are discouraged and want to contribute to TRAVELLER** (without the bitching), unsubscribe from HIWG's list, resign your membership in the organization, and JOIN

## TERRA

TERRA stands for fun, truth, and the pursuit of happiness in Traveller.

TERRA stands for *Traveller Enthusiasts Rimward Rebellion Association* and is an Internet organization for fans of Traveller, who want to development work in the Traveller Universe.

To join, send an "unsubscribe hiwg" message to majordomo@fwe.com, send a resignation e-mail (or otherwise) to ClayRBush@aol.com, and then send a "subscribe manipulator" message to majordomo@fwe.com.

Membership is open to most people. (I approve sub requests.)

A cautionary note. This organization won't be like the former History of the Imperium Working Group. There will be standards and rules adhered to. Quality will be the goal, fun will be the outcome. Work dedicated to TERRA will be under my supervision, and eventually a committee by consensus.

A promise. If you don't get published out of this, you will get a place that you can be proud of belonging to.

I am very pleased that people like CORE are contributing to the T4 universe, and hope that TERRA can be as successful. This comes from an idea that I and former HIWG members have discussed.

Leroy Guatney

TERRA Supreme Commander

(If this goes as I expect, the HIWG list will need a new home in a month or so. If it goes really well, HIWG will not matter.)

## QUESTIONS

I've had a number of questions about TERRA. I hope this helps.

TERRA is not for everybody: I don't know if we could do it with too large a group.

TERRA is starting with the Solomani Rim sector and its neighbors and "doing it right."

TERRA is what diehards like me joined HIWG for in the first place. Sector Development with the aim of publication. This time, the kid gloves are off: no hands tied behind your backs, but at the same time, what gets done is not a set or rogue operations with everyone going their own way. This is the best idea for a Meta-campaign Traveller setting that has ever been ambitiously attempted.

TERRA is not hand-wringing about what the publisher of Traveller is going to do next, waiting anxiously for word of what is official canon and what is not.

TERRA is development for several milieus of Traveller at the same time and will provide a correlated history to supplement the development. It is more than just throwing a bunch of rules into the computer and seeing what falls out, it is the true art of creation.

TERRA is not for lurkers, posting once a year or so. It is for people who are willing to be part of a coordinated effort *with* a mind. It is what some of us *wanted* HIWG to be in the first place. Thanks for all of your interest. Actions are needed. If you have any doubt about whether you qualify to join or not, write me.

## REQUIREMENTS

*Requirement of leaving HIWG list:* It is my way of determining if someone is capable/willing to give up their old habits, for new, better ones. :)

*Exclusion:* I have an exclusion for my previous statement about requirements to join the TERRA list. Marc Miller is a guest member of HIWG, and as such does not require membership in HIWG, nor resignation from the HIWG list.

## DISINTEREST

I am not going anywhere. I am just pulling in my perks (hosting the list) for my own personal use.

Until my first TERRA post, I had cared about members staying in the HIWG. Now, thanks to your illustrious leader, I no longer do, but then, I did provide an option for some fellow true-believers, so it can't be all bad.

## REASONS

**Guatney:** [CORE] reminds me of how I *could* have influenced things early, before it came out the way it did. Not this time, if I can do something about it--and I think I can.

I was asked to kibitz on *Pocket Empires*. But CORE did not conduct an open forum, for *all* to comment on while in the works. There is just too much sour grapes here, and the way HIWG seems to be going (unless I did open some eyes), I don't want to have any fuzzy lines to distinguish. Those who work on TERRA are going to have to be cogs on the team, and there will be a solid focus.

## Are Imperium Games improving?

**Bryan Borich:** Imperium Games has turned around lately and is producing better products, especially the material written by the CORE group, hopefully and perhaps with our help this trend will continue.

FS and CSC were the last product before the change. For that matter *MO* and *EA* were inbetween. *Pocket Empires* is probably the first product entirely under the new management.

**Christopher Griffen:** Can you tell me which products and how they've improved? I'd be interested to know your opinion. I bought the first hardcover (a disgrace) and *M:O* (marginal background material with some really bad lapses, the worst of which was fusion plus).

I've heard a few people saying good things about *Emperor's Arsenal* and *Pocket Empires*, but certain things lead me to believe their objectivity is in question.

**Borich:** Actually I thought *MO* was pretty good. It had a few mistakes, and was badly presented, but most of these problems actually related to IG and only some to the authors. As for Fusion plus, well it's another plot device like *Virus*, but without most of the complaints that that caused.

I've heard (but can't verify personally) that *Emperor's Arsenal* is excellent. It has a couple of problems, one was layout. The second was giving the ROM access to TL15 instead of 12, blame Marc for that (though supposedly on TL15 in certain highly experimental areas).

*Pocket Empires* is a system for TCS like campaigns, at least insofar as economics are concerned. It suffers once again from a layout problem, but nothing to serious I guess and begs for a

spreadsheet. I don't think it contains a combat system however, but neither did TCS. That's the word so far.

JTAS #26 is vastly improved from #25, still not outstanding, but at least maybe as good as some of the old JTAS material.

Hopefully they'll get a graphics artist soon and this might solve some of their layout problems (though I expect not all, as not everyone will ever be satisfied).

<but certain things lead me to believe their objectivity is in question.> I'm trying to remain objective on IG, but I'm not yet going out of my way to endorse their products. I'd follow Harold's advice on that, look, read, review, and then wait, and then wait some more and then buy if it still looks good.

From what I've gathered here and there, especially on the TML and from the CORE group. IG obviously hasn't done any sort of publishing before (or even run this sort of business or anything like it before, this is somewhat obvious from their early mistakes). IG is still on a steep learning curve, but they do try and listen (albiet it needs a heavy hammer sometimes), their products should continue improving, but I expect it'll be at least another several months before all the major bugs are worked out (I'm a pessimist here).

One of their major needs is a graphics artist and supposedly they are getting one. Another thing is to learn to delay products if necessary for further overhaul, and they seem to be doing this to some extent, but probably not enough yet.

I'd be kind enough to give them an A for effort, but it's probably around a C or D for results so far.

## T4 PRODUCTS

—Bryan Borich

First, I think the products are overpriced, especially given the quality to date. Secondly, the quality of the products so far has mostly disappointed me, even though I was expecting problems given their production schedule.

The main rulebook needs a major rewrite (not errata like MT and TNE, but major rule fixes). The only reason I can see to buy the new version is for the shipbuilding rules, unless I hear from IG what's being done to it.

*Starships:* I heard enough on the TML to avoid this product. I did consider buying it if only for the shipbuilding rules, but those were broken too.

CSC: haven't read it completely myself, but it at least appeared to suffer from layout problems.

*Alien Archive:* Okay, but I felt it could have been better. I definitely got tired of all those meteor impacts; obviously the parties involved got the TML rock throwing in their heads too much.

*Milieu 0:* The only real decent product so far (that I've seen), still had some problems, but 90% was caused by IG, and maybe 10% by the production schedule (this comes from a discussion with the authors).

*First Survey:* wish I had waited longer till the bugs were noticed, at least glad I got it relatively cheap (\$15) from Kevin.

*EA:* I'll probably buy it, but I expect I won't quite use it as is.

*EA, CSC, Starships:* A set of construction systems that don't match with rules that don't work. Not all this is the fault of IG, but it's still something they could have kept from happening if they settled for some delays for more overview.

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## Dinosaur Continent

--Clay Bush

I am developing Carl's World in Diaspora. This is the place where a Jurassic Park type recreation of dinosaurs occurred. I am interested in input in several areas.

Note: As the dinosaurs were on a small continent, referees could easily move that continent onto a world in their campaign area.

1. Dinosaurs. I sent out my TNE stats for the dinosaurs listed in *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*. I am going to develop stats for others named in *Jurassic Park*.

Question: Has anyone else worked with dinosaurs? Would you like to share credit for whichever denizens you carried forward to the

modern era?

2. Vilani animals: The world has other theme areas. I am looking at developing encounter tables for Vilani and Terran animals. These would be as hooks for further adventures, and would certainly be exportable to other campaigns.

Question: Any favorite beasts out there? Suitable for a habitable world, of course. Carl's World is size 9 and atmosphere 6.

3. Illo: One encounter is with a group from a warlike minor race who were touring when everything fell apparent. They've decided to stay outside, and await the PC group at a bridge on a jungle trail.

Problem: My write-ups have been uninteresting. I need an illo to make these guys believable to me and readers. Anyone interested?

American lions and cheetahs, the sabretooth, "Irish elk" (a giant deer), the aurochs, cave bears, not to mention the Vargr fave, dire wolves. Of course, these all have to survive another 300,000 years of evolution on Urunishu, but many might survive.

So, assuming that you could get samples of these beasts from Urunishu (which may be hard -- it's a good candidate to be the first Imperial Reserve created), you could have a "Dawn of Man Land." Or, this being Carl's World, you could also have a spot where Pleistocene fauna and dinosaurs live side-by-side, straight from the comic books.

Harold D. Hale: I'm wondering what the gravity is like on Urunishu -- assuming it is greater, won't that tend to make the land mammals evolve into stout but smaller versions?

I don't see why the government wouldn't allow some researchers from a megacorporation to go in and collect genetic samples. (In exchange for sharing the data collected, the megacorporation gets to keep the genetic material.) Given TL 15, making new copies of the animals from the genetic material collected shouldn't be a problem.

### Early Vilani Construction

I'm running this past everyone for comments and improvements.

For my Dinosaur Continent project, I'm going to develop the coastal settlement as imitating a low tech civilization where large carnivores were present. Since *Vilani & Vargr* showed a human riding a two-legged beastie, why not say the style comes from early Vland? And it would interest tourists.

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## Improving? (con.)

from happening if they settled for some delays for more overview.

*Pocket Empires*: Seems interesting. Overall I think I'm happy with the CORE team, they remind me of what HIWG-UK used to be like and maybe HIWG itself, so I expect I might buy it (as I expect I might buy most of their stuff, but not immediately).

JTAS 25: So broken as to be a waste of paper. A set of adventures that need major fixes/rewrites (and overpriced even at the sub rate). And definitely not up to the old JTAS standards.

JTAS 26: Just got it and haven't had time to read it, I expect I'll like it better than 25. (At least there's more Traveller players writing this time).

Speaking of which, Harold you might have wanted to state in your letter something about CORE. They are a group of T4 writers who deserve some praise.

### Urunishu

Steven Bonneville: Another consideration is the existence of Urunishu. For those who may have forgotten, Urunishu is a the world investigated by haut-Devroe and revealed to be something like an Ancient zoological preserve, possessing fauna which is of Terran descent ranging in size from "rodents to baleen whales."

The twist is, Urunishu was seeded three hundred thousand years ago, during Earth's Middle Pleistocene age.

This means that a lot of interesting megafauna that is extinct on Earth might *not* be in Traveller. For instance, if they recreated part of the North American ecosystem, the primary herbivores would be bison, antelope, North American horses, and mammoths -- the last two extinct. There's a lot of other interesting animals...a beaver the size of a bear, a giant ground sloth,

**1. Settlement wall:** 5-10 feet thick, so it can't be pushed down. 10 or 15 feet high, so it can't be jumped or crawled over. (Is this high enough?)

The wall would not be crenelated or have towers, because it wasn't intended for fighting human armies but thwarting beasts.

*Bryan Borich:* I'd go for the 10 feet thick, and 20 high with a small ditch running around, about 4-5 feet wide. Another possibility would be large tree trunks used, sharpened and faced outward to prevent the larger critters from approaching and damaging the wall.

**2. Main entrance:** This would be a simple "trap": the outer door leads to a walled box with an inner door. That's sufficient to catch an animal.

**3. Wall:** 10 meter open space inside wall.

**4. Noble/Warrior Houses:**

Spaced equally around the wall. From the rooftops, warriors would fire arrows at beasts investigating the wall. I'm inclined to put the warriors' living quarters on the roof, with a second roof to keep flying beasties (pterodactyls, etc.) from harassing the warriors. The upper level would not have permanent

walls, although panels/blinds could be lowered in bad weather.

The lower level would be for dependents and guests. Access to the upper level would be by side stairs or ladders. Quick departure from the roof could also be made by ropes.

This could set up a Vilani proverb: "The front door doesn't lead anywhere." Think about looking for side doors to modern buildings...

Arrows would be unlikely to strike a fatal blow against a dinosaur. If the arrow were dipped in waste products from the shigulii's food processing, the extracted toxins would be irritating or occasionally fatal.

*Bryan Borich:* Use large arrows, siege machine type.

**5. Shigulii Area:** The food prep area would be near the main entrance. Thus, in Vilani society, the shigulii quarter would be by the main entrance.

Or would different families/clans be in different parts of the settlement?

**6. Temple center:** An inner circle/redoubt? Or would these be scattered throughout the settlement? This/these would also store

food, records, and make tools.

[So, should 5 & 6 be centralized or dispersed?]

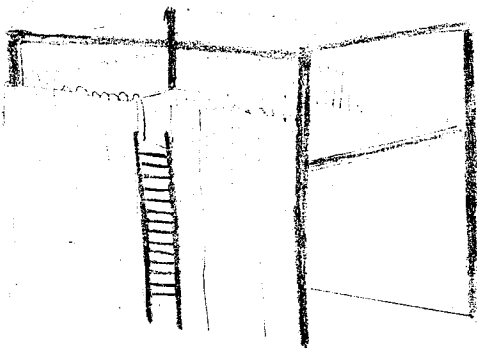
*Bryan Borich:* I'd want to put these together in the center.

**[A] Outlying watch towers:** I suggest these would be ziggurats, with the upper level reached by ladders. A wooden structure would be too easily demolished by an irritated T-rex. A solid hill is hard to demolish.

Having a few of these scattered on "borders", it would provide a refuge for a travelling party. It could be a useful adventure nugget.

*Bryan Borich:* Actually I'd probably plant the community on top of hills, easier to protect, harder to get at, and hopefully on firm bedrock.

*Clay:* A hilltop location was favored for early castles, but later examples chose flat ground because they could more dispersed. I prefer to place the Vilani cities on flat ground, with one surrounding defense system and few internal fortifications. This would be consistent with Vilani focusing on a cohesive society. The Vilani want the flat ground for farming, and plenty of interior space for gardens.



Every now and then, go away, take a little relaxation, because when you come back to your work, your judgement will be surer.

To remain constantly at work will cause you to lose power of judgement.

Go some distance away, because then the work appears smaller and more of it can be taken in at a glance, and a lack of harmony or proportion is more readily seen.

—Leonardo da Vinci

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## Phoenix Foundation Project

--John Kovalic

I had a book idea accepted a while back by Gold Rush Games that was to be a supplement for T4. Since I'm waiting for the new edition, I put the project on hold. Then (following some of the recent, unfortunate threads) I got an idea.

Instead of making this a John Kovalic book, why not make it a HIWG book?

I'd be glad to invite any members to help with any aspects of the project. The pay won't be much at all, but I'll certainly share what little there is.

This would at least be a way for us to share resources as an organization. Also, since the book will be background-heavy, even those unfamiliar with T4 would be able to help.

Here's the (very) brief synopsis I sent Gold Rush. Various dates and locations **have** to be changed, since I hadn't even **started** researching this at the time. Heck, even the name will probably change, since, as I re-read this, there's too much of an Asimovian "Foundation" flavor to it. But it can really go wherever we want to take it, and could certainly concentrate on "core" HIWG strengths, like background development, et al.

Gold Rush sent along a contract, so everything's a go. I'm sure Mark (the head honcho at GWG) wouldn't mind if we made this a group effort, and I, for one, would love to work with some of you guys, whose opinions and knowledge I've grown to respect over the last two years:

### PROPOSAL:

#### THE PHOENIX FOUNDATION

A Sourcebook with Adventures for Traveller: 4th edition

**Synopsis:** Before the Solomani

development of the Jump Drive, the Phoenix, a massive STL generation ship financed by ec-centric industrialist Leon Rasmussen, left Earth orbit for what is now known as Dingir, where habitable planets were believed to exist, to create a utopian society. 1,000 families were chosen from across the Earth to build Rasmussen's "Perfect World."

Onboard was Simon Daedalus, a 10-year old genius with massive, undiscovered psionic powers. As he grew, slowly, painfully discovering his gift, he vowed to unleash the hidden potentials of psionics and to elevate it to its proper position: first amongst the Human Sciences. Gradually gaining importance aboard the Phoenix, he subtly turned some of the ship's schools and laboratories to the fields of Psionic Research. Over the decades, new generations of psionics grew and developed under the watchful eye of a society that no longer feared them.

Yet Daedalus's brilliant mind not only foresaw the development of the Jump Drive on Terra, and guessed that Terran teams would probably be waiting to greet the Phoenix at Dingir, but realized the persecution the new Psionic Masters of the Phoenix would undergo. Now commander of the mission, he changed the Phoenix's course coreward.

By the time the Phoenix reached Nusku, the jump drive was not only in Solomani hands, but the first war with the Vilani empire was well underway. Disgusted by the violence FTL technology now made available to all races, the people of the Phoenix Foundation vowed never to be a part of any society this destructive, this wasteful of life and sentient potential.

Using their psionic powers, the people of the Phoenix took over two Vilani warships that attempted boarding actions. The Phoenix was now Jump capable, and protected by the Pegasus, the re-named Vilani cruiser *Vlashilaa*. (The other Vilani ship, the *Ka'Kresh*, was left behind with both Vilani crews).

Simon Daedalus died at the age of 103 soon after the first jump took the Phoenix League further in a week than it had taken them 93 years to reach by that point.

Throughout the Long Night, as the nomadic Phoenix Foundation grew, and more ships were added to its small flotilla. But the families ("clans") of the group were not only powerful philosopher/psionics. Some developed esoteric branches of technological research. Others threw themselves into the hard sciences. Some ships of the flotilla left for other vistas, while others were lost in battles with local dictators who would shoot first, and ask questions later.

The Phoenix Foundation is VERY small, far too small to worry the new Imperium, which dismisses rumors of its existence - but its reach is far.

From the Solomani Rim to the Imperial Core, agents have made their mark on regional conflicts and dictators. Rumors follow their visits to systems, and local children sing songs of magicians and mages who pass in the night.

Some sightings over the years have caused a curious few to deduce the Phoenix Foundation's existence. Some intellectuals have formed a group to counter the shadowy psionics' activities, fearing what may be its ultimate, unknown goals.

The Phoenix itself has disappeared. Though smaller ships of its



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## Survey of Usage

flotilla are encountered, the last confirmed sighting of the grand, giant generation ship was twenty-two years ago. Does the Foundation base itself from a planet now? Is one of the local dictatorships a cover for its operatives? Was the *Phoenix* destroyed, or is it still out there, in the darkness, waiting?

### BREAKDOWN

**SOURCEBOOK:** The Phoenix Foundation - its history, philosophy, and ships. Player characters - their career paths. What the Imperium knows of the Phoenix Foundation. What those seeking the Phoenix Foundation know of it.

**ADVENTURES:** 1) "THE END JUSTIFIES THE MEANS": PCs as Phoenix Foundation agents, attempting to overthrow a world dictator. 2) "FIRST CONTACT": The non-Phoenix Foundation PCs encounter a Phoenix Foundation ship. 3) "THE

**HUNTER AND THE HUNTED":** The PCs attempt to track down a lone Phoenix Foundation operative on their home planet.

**Leroy William Lu Guatney:** Since you're new to HIWG, I should tell you that the *last* thing anyone here has ever wanted to do was work that was likely to published over.

**Harold:** The problem: why no one works on joint projects anymore.

Everyone is so afraid of having their stuff declared 'variant' (non-canon) that they concentrate on much smaller projects that can be easily accomplished by one person.

**Bryan Borich:** What rules systems are people using for their Traveller games?

**Leroy William Lu Guatney:** T4, as soon as I can figure out how to convert characters. I was fence-sitting until a certain note in late-May made me decide. :)

Actually, all joking aside, I haven't changed mechanics for any era until now. When I realized what was going on, I had to make a change. As a friend of mine says, "When I find out people are playing politics, I get involved!" :)

Again, actually, as J.P. and some online here have pointed out, Traveller really is a background universe that people have *never* (until now) griped about the mechanics so much. Lately, I've even heard people who *never* played CT gripe about CT. (Huh???? Yes he wrote that!)

**Harold Hale:** TNE, modified in light of four years of experience.

**Roger Myhre:** I plan to use a mix if MT and TNE, with a CT/MT setting. I may use the character generation rules in the T4 Deluxe set when that is released. And of course there will be some homebrew rules as well.

**Clay Bush:** I am using TNE and T4 at GenCon. Those are my next scheduled events. (I had to schedule my events in February, before I got most of the T4 books. So the TNE may be a holdover, but I could get it ready easily in plenty of time. The T4 events should be simple to flesh out.)

A project of mine is to work up some miniatures events for play at conventions. I enjoy miniatures, and had a good time running the Mexicans at GDW's *T:2000* v2.4 demo, 'The Wild Bunch.'

I do not run ship combat currently, because there have been

too many ship combat systems for me to trust I'll get convention players who like the one I use. My recent ship gaming has been with *Starfire*. I like the range of weapon systems and their interaction with different defences.

**Rob Prior:** TNE and T4 (with MT/CT/TNE replacements for rules that are broken or that I don't like).

I am leaving the personal combat rules at MT/TNE (I hate fixed range bands).

I use my extension to the CT trade rules. I use WBH/WT for world generation (MT/TNE).

I like *Brilliant Lances* for ship combat.

I am looking at converting to *Babylon Project* rules, but have held off a final decision until the ship design/combat rules become available.

**John Kovalic:** *GURPS: Space*, waiting for T4 v1.1

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## Stargate Universe

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—Clay Bush

The movie STARGATE is easily expanded into a role-playing universe. It develops alternate technology (stargates), but the setting and technology are plausible. Unlike most SF movies, the monsters do not mature in an hour or otherwise violate physical laws.

The movie setting has been developed in several (unexciting) novels and now a comic. All are copyright, which bars use of their characters but not of ancient Egyptian motifs or modern technology.

### **MISSION**

The party will travel through the Stargate to a new setting. A robot probe already determined the destination was habitable. To return to earth, they need the seventh symbol to add to the six already known. They are to discover that symbol and return.

This may involve any amount of adventuring outside their immediate arrival point.

### **ENEMY**

Ra was killed in the movie, with his palace attendants and guards. Resistance can take of two paths.

Locales are now guarded only by the local populace and scattered guards who do not know Ra is dead. This assumes that only Ra had the ability to travel between systems in his palace pyramid. It agrees with there being guards at Nagida when the Terrans arrived.

The sequel novels choose instead a host of minor godlings who served Ra, and who have access to some of Ra's technology. They may travel via stargates and have a limited supply of ships. Each godling has some warriors, leading to alliances and jostling for power.

**POPULACE:** Ra denied servant people's any writing or weapons. They were also barred from the stargate pyramids, which means a stargate will be unguarded. Any surveillance was also banned, so initial exploration should go undetected.

Ra warned people to not accept strangers. (The Nagida elders only accepted the Terrans because one wore the symbol of Ra.) In the past, Ra stayed away from systems and sent in agents a year later who reported he was dead. Later he arrived and punished those who acted as if he were dead (e.g. mortal). Consequently, cooperation can not be expected.

**WARRIORS:** Warriors would compete with each other, with only the best getting in the palace guard.

Personal combat was the only avenue of advancement. They are therefore warriors, not soldiers.

The beast armor is bullet-proof. It does not, however, cover more than the chest and head.

Blast rifles are single-shot weapon with variable settings. The number of shots varies with the settings used, but is not specified in any published source.

The single-man fighters fire rockets. They are not stealthy, since they did not need to be. They are maneuverable, as they were used in duels. Since they only maneuver against each other, they are equally slow. They are armored against blast rifle fire, since rebels might capture a few of those. (Pilots carry a blast rifle for personal use after landing. A fixed mount for it makes sense, but rockets were always used in ground attacks.)

### **CHARACTERS and EQUIPMENT**

A mix of military types is justifiable, since personnel will be selected for their ability to disappear from normal life on Terra. The movie team had a special forces colonel, a meteorologist lieutenant, several enlisted, and one civilian. None were recent recruits.

A recurring character in role-playing events has been a CIA agent with infiltration and language-learning skills. With the Cold War over, he was surplus on earth. If asked about why he was there, he steered the conversation to the legal requirement to not operate on U.S. soil—where the conversation generally ended!

Missions run so far have provided the party two HUMVs, one each with machine gun and anti-air rocket launcher mounted. Two vehicles provide redundancy, more cargo capacity, and permit the party to split up.

The wheeled robot explorer sent in advance could only run a few atmosphere tests. If it had not come out indoors, it could have run other devices productively. It also is useful for testing the stargate return link to earth.

A PC with a digital camera can be used to examine the night sky, and identify some symbols on the local stargate as constellations visible from that planet.

An remote-piloted vehicle (RPV, or drone) can be towed behind one of the HUMVs. This permits the party to quickly determine the lay of the land, but advertises their presence to locals.

A motion-sensor attached to a machine gun has also been proposed. It would be placed to "cover" the teleporter circle in the Stargate room.

## **TERRAIN**

Terrain on Nagida was arid desert with sand dunes. The only important feature was a cliff wall with an open mine and a city on it. (Efforts are underway to explore the rest of the world, through long-range drones and eventually satellites from mobile launchers.)

Ra arranged some population exchanges to avoid inbreeding. From this source, the natives of Abydos know there are mines on other desert worlds. It is unclear whether this is the only type of world settled, or if population exchanges were only between worlds with similar climates.

It is unclear whether Ra exchanged food for the mineral, or simply impose a quota. Food production in deserts is low, so I went with food exchange and temperate zones being harvested or cultivated somewhere.

One unused stargate in a novel was overgrown by encroaching jungle. Variety in settings is catching.

**THE STARGATE:** This is covered with symbols. By tying some to constellations and others to planets, it is possible to work out workable sequences that may cause the stargate to connect to another stargate. The party should be able to limit the seventh symbol to 5-9 possibilities.

After three failed attempts to establish a connection, the stargate emits a warning hum. The populace reports they were warned that playing with stargate may cause it to explode...evidently on the fourth error.

**PYRAMID:** The pyramid on Abydos was identical to one on earth. Similar or identical layouts have been used since.

The stargate room is the deepest.

It is 20 meters square. A circular area is the terminus for a teleportation device activated when a flying temple is atop the pyramid. A ramp leads to the second room.

The second room is 20 meters by 40 meters. A ramp leads up to the third room.

The third room is the surface level. This is 40 meters by 120 meters long. Two rows of columns run down the long walls.

A straight passageway leads to the outlying entry way pyramid.

In the entry way pyramid the passageway expands into a 10 meters by 20 meters room. Two rows of three 2 meter square pillars divide up the room. The passageway then continues to the outside.

A 5 meter wide ledge surrounds the pyramid, with two cul-de-sacs caused in the back by the passageway to the main pyramid. A descending ramp with a 5 degree decline runs straight out of the pyramid. A stone wall 4' high and 2' thick edges the ledge and ramp.

**ROAD?:** Interestingly, the exitway and ramp from the pyramid pointed straight at the city of Abydos. Investigation may reveal a road buried under the dunes at the Nagida site.

**CITY:** Abydos was surrounded by high walls. No one was allowed to live elsewhere, and all had to be inside the walls by nightfall.

## **World Explorers**

Since Abydos has an oxygen atmosphere, it should have temperate zones. There is a whole world to explore, with a single, small opening in a desert.

Natural and animal encounters are dangerous to isolated exploration parties. The most interesting interaction will be with oversight groups and competitors.

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## **MINIATURES AND TRAVELLER**

**Clay Bush:** I'm working on how to pitch a miniatures event at a con. **TRAVELLER** starship combat drew no interest. No one has ever run **STRIKER** locally. GDW employees reported that in man-to-man miniatures events, most players tended to stay (and die) in one mob (without flanking, etc.). Since they ran shipboard or station combat, I'm considering a planetary situation.

**John Kovalic:** This is one of the reasons I'm trying to get a playable Traveller variant for *Full Thrust*. Most non-Traveller players don't enjoy Battle Rider (they handle Brilliant Lances even worse). But I think Full Thrust will make a very playable little Traveller game.

**Rob Prior:** I've run the Shadows adventure twice now (third time on Monday). I use printed-out floor plans (<http://www.interlog.com/~dmci104/GamingClub/Traveller> and follow links) segmented so that I only put them on the table when the players enter. Seems to work OK as a *fast* means of exploration (no annoying pauses for drawing a map) provided that the entire adventure is over in a single session.

Monday's game will be a variant of the Shadows adventure set in the Star Wars universe. The players (Grade 8 kids + teacher) are a rebel team sent to find a location for a new secret base. Atmosphere is noxious but not too deadly (breather masks OK). While they are in the complex an Imperial force will land and ambush them.

**Clay Bush:** Another adventure with floor plans is *Research Station Gamma*. Although *Prison Planet* has floor plans, all the unarmed convicts would hard to track without a lot of unnecessary painting.

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## A look at the new Babylon 5 RPG Task system

--James Lindsay

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I picked up the Babylon 5 RPG and thought it might be interesting to share the task system used in "The Babylon Project" (or "TBP").

There are similarities between the T4 and TBP task systems. Both systems use six-sided dice (TBP using only two dice), both use an "Attribute + Skill" method of determining character ability, and both use different difficulty levels. Both systems determine critical successes or failures, with TBP offering multiple levels of success or failure. TBP also offers two additional task results that are not *directly* linked to the attempted task at hand.

Like T4, TBP uses "Attribute + Skill" to determine the general competence of each skill possession by the character. Skills have recommended attributes with which they are considered most appropriately associated. TBP attributes range from 1 to 9, and skills range from 0 to 5. (Characters can also have one or more skill "Specialties", which give a further bonus of +2 to that skill).

### Difficulty Levels

Instead of a variable number of dice, TBP uses two dice and fixed target numbers as follows:

#### Difficulty Target Rating Number

Trivial 2

Easy 3

Basic 5

Average 7

Tricky 9

Difficult 11

Very Difficult 15

Next to Impossible 17

Miraculous 25

This list can easily be toned down to six entries for T4 conversion.

The high number of defined difficulty ratings is necessary for TBP's ranged combat rules (and possibly others that I haven't read yet :)

During contested skills between two individuals (such as an arm wrestling match) don't bother assigning a Difficulty Rating. Instead, simply have everyone involved make a roll, with the one rolling highest declared the winner. TBP has rules for team work and complex/time consuming tasks but I won't get into those rules.

### Random Modifier

A character's "Ability" is modified using what TBP calls a "Random Modifier" (ranging from -5 to +5). Each player has two six-sided dice of different colours. One die is considered "Positive" (traditionally green) while the other is "Negative" (traditionally red). Both are rolled together, and the die with the **lower face value** becomes the "Random Modifier".

Example: a Positive "6" and a Negative "2" result in a Random Modifier of -2. A Positive "1" and a Negative "2" result in a Random Modifier of +1.

Identical die results generate a Random Modifier of 0, except that "box cars" or "snake eyes" are unique results -- "Benefits" and "Setbacks", respectively.

### Unpredictable Events

The "box cars" and "snake-eyes" results that I mentioned earlier are used in TBP to represent unpredictable events, not **directly** related to the actual task test, that might "benefit" or "set back" the character performing the task. Since these two dice results are still treated as a Random Modifier of "0", a Setback result could still

be a success (and vice versa).

Example: Suppose a character attempts to pick a mechanical lock. A Benefit result ("box cars") could indicate the inadvertent discovery of a key under the doormat. A Setback ("snake eyes") could indicate a local security guard just happens to arrive.

### Success/Failure

Subtract the assigned Difficulty Rating from final total of (Attribute + Skill + Specialty + Random Modifier).

#### Degree of Success/Failure

-6 or more Critical Failure

-4 or -5 Significant Failure roll

-2 or -3 Normal Failure

-1 Marginal Failure

0 or 1 Marginal Success

2 or 3 Normal Success

4 or 5 Significant Success

6 or more Critical Success

These degrees of success or failure have rough guidelines for a TBP referee, but one can use the simple "roll failed by 5" or "roll made by 5" to causing Critical Failures or Successes in Traveller.

### Conversion

This system would need a bit of adjustment to satisfy some of those people that dislike the current T4 task system (myself included). Things like adopting a multiplier of two or three to all Traveller skills so attributes don't dominate the game (TBP has over twice as many calculated and derived attributes as T4), or simplifying the two tables I have included above come to mind.